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E.O. 12958: NA
TAG: KWMN, PHUM, PREL, KG
SUBJECT: EMBASSY BISHKEK'S SERIES OF EVENTS TO COMMEMORATE 16 DAYS
FREE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

REF: STATE 142614

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Working in conjunction with Post's Mentor Program for Women Leaders and Peace Corps, Embassy Bishkek organized a series of events around the country, including the cities of Bishkek, Osh and Naryn to commemorate the 16 days free of violence against women that run from November 25 to December 10. Post organized movie screenings and discussion groups. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) In Bishkek, on November 28, 2007, together with the American University in Central Asia, Post organized an event where approximately 40 participants of the Women's Mentor Program met to discuss an American film about sexual harassment and violence against women. The discussion was moderated by mentor and gender expert Ms. Shishkaraeva, the Soros Foundation's regional manager on educational programs. Other mentors attended the event, including UNDP's regional coordinator Ms. Nurgul Asylbekova, Ms. Muhametshina, the representative from the Mayor's office, and the head of the Sezim shelter and the nominee from Kyrgyzstan for the Department's 2007 Woman of Courage Award Ms. Bubusara Ryskulova. During the introductory remarks, the Public Affairs Officer underlined the importance of a world free of violence, especially in the Kyrgyz Republic, where there has been a noticeable backsliding in women's equality and bride kidnapping and domestic violence against women are becoming more common place. AUCA's President Dr. Ellen Hurwitz noted that "only by discussing openly the roots and consequences of prejudice and violence against women can these injustices be rooted out." The students were very interested in discussion and actively participated with personal experiences and stories. Male students also expressed strong interest in participating in such an important discussion.

¶3. (SBU) In Osh, on November 30, Ms. Akchach Joldosheva, head of the Gender Centre, led the Mentorship Program's discussion of violence against women, and in particular, the issue of bride kidnapping. One of the most active mentors, Ms. Jyldyz Aknazarova, vice-rector of the Osh State University, helped with organizing the event. During the roundtable she stressed the importance of protecting women's rights. Other participants included Mr. Sonunbek Junusbayev, a leader of the youth NGO "Jash kadam", who explained to the participants that "women should involve men in the discussion of women issues and that they do so in their NGO." Ms. Farida Abdullaeva, the Deputy Governor on women's issues, explained how the government works on gender issues according to the national plan. U.S. Peace Corps Volunteers Rebecca Johnson and Christina Schulz also participated in the roundtable discussion. Ms. Antonina Zaharova, one of the mentors, suggested explaining to youth what awaits them if they are not able to protect their own rights.

¶4. (SBU) In Naryn, on November 28, 2007, Ms. Ainura Temirova, professor of history and political science at the Naryn College of Law facilitated the discussion on domestic violence, which was

attended by twenty-five mentors and students. The discussion was co-facilitated by Peace Corps volunteers Eugene Imas and Virginia Jurika, who introduced participants to the history of this important day. As a result of this discussion, participants decided to develop a project specifically aimed at eliminating domestic violence and promoting women's rights.

¶5. (SBU) Post also participated in other events that took place in Bishkek that were sponsored by local NGOs. On November 29, 2007, DCM Litzenberger made remarks at the forum "New Faces of Kyrgyzstan - for democratic development!" for women candidates to the Jogorku Kenesh. The event was organized by Ms. Gulnara Ibraeva, the head of the NGO "Agency of Social Technologies". The DCM stressed the importance of female candidates participating in the elections process as a reflection of the "healthiest democracy is one where all segments in the society are represented."

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